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JC872 U.S. PTO

07-21-00

 JC542 U.S. PTO
 09/621315
 07/20/00

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Patent Application of: Mark Ronald Sikkink et al.

 Title: AN INTERFACE FOR SYNCHRONOUS DATA TRANSFER BETWEEN DOMAINS LOCKED AT
 DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES

Attorney Docket No.: 499.081US1

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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

**AN INTERFACE FOR SYNCHRONOUS DATA
TRANSFER BETWEEN DOMAINS CLOCKED
AT DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES**

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AN INTERFACE FOR SYNCHRONOUS DATA TRANSFER BETWEEN DOMAINS CLOCKED AT DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES

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Field of the Invention

The present invention is related to integrated circuits, and more particularly to an interface for synchronous data transfer between domains, circuits, systems or the like clocked at different frequencies when the clocks are derived from the same high
10 frequency source.

Background Information

What is needed is an interface that will permit the synchronous transfer of data between different domains, circuits, systems or the like that are clocked at different
15 frequencies with minimal latency and error free transfer of the data.

Transfer of data between domains clocked at different frequency ratios is possible with a circular First-In-First-Out (FIFO) buffer. However, this transfer is asynchronous creating latency in the transfer of the data which can adversely affect the speed or efficiency of performance of the domains, circuits or systems operating at
20 different clock frequencies that need to communicate with each other. Input data from the sending domain is strobed or written into the FIFO buffer at the data rate of the sending domain with a "write pointer," and the data is read or transferred to the receiving domain at the data rate of the receiving domain by a "read pointer." The control logic controlling the transfer of data must be programmed to prevent the "write
25 pointer" from overtaking the "read pointer" and vice versa. The size of the buffer and difference between the two frequency domains are important considerations for efficient and error free data transfer.

Summary of the Invention

30 In accordance with the present invention, an interface for synchronous data transfer between domains clocked at different frequencies includes a first latch for receiving data from a first domain clocked at one frequency when the first latch is

selected and a second latch for receiving data from the first domain when the second latch is selected. A third latch is provided for transferring data from either the first latch or the second latch to the second domain clocked at another frequency. The third latch is toggled to receive data from either the first or second latch in response to a negative
 5 edge of a clock pulse of the second domain. Data is also alternately loaded in either the first or second latch from the first domain for transfer to the second domain when the second domain is clocked.

In further accordance with the present invention, a method for synchronous data transfer between clocked domains includes: loading a first master latch with data from
 10 the first domain in response to a first domain clock pulse; transferring the data loaded in the first master latch to the second domain through a slave latch in response to a second domain clock pulse; toggling the slave latch to switch to receive data from a second master latch in response to a negative edge of the clock pulse of the second domain clock; loading the second master latch with data from the first domain in response to
 15 another first domain clock pulse; transferring the data loaded in the second master latch to the second domain through the slave latch in response to another second domain clock pulse; toggling the slave latch to switch to receive data from the first master latch in response to the negative edge of the clock pulse of the second domain clock; repeating a cycle of alternately loading the first and second master latches and
 20 transferring data to the second domain through the slave latch until a master clear (MC) signal is received by the slave and master latches. At least one non-operate or hold state is entered during each repeated cycle for at least one clock pulse of the faster domain clock to prevent the faster clocked domain from overrunning the slower clocked domain.

25

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is block diagram showing a primary source clock and how secondary clocks of different frequencies are derived from the primary clock source.

Figure 2A is a schematic diagram of a sequencer in Figure 1 further illustrating
 30 how secondary clocks of different frequencies are derived from a primary clock source.

Figure 2B is a schematic diagram illustrating how a half cycle phase shift is generated in the timing diagrams associated with Figure 2 A.

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of a secondary sync pulse sequencer for deriving secondary sync clocks for generating clock pulses of different frequencies and pulse widths.

Figure 4 is a schematic diagram of a basic sequencer element.

5 Figure 5 is a schematic diagram of an interface circuit for transferring data from a first domain clocked at one frequency to a second domain clocked at a different frequency in accordance with the present invention.

Figure 6 is a timing diagram of the operation of the interface circuit of Figure 5 illustrating data transfer from a domain clocked at one frequency to a domain clocked at a slower frequency for different sync clock frequency ratios of the first and second domain clocks.

Figure 7 is a state diagram of the sequence of operation illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 8 is a timing diagram of the operation of the interface circuit of Figure 5 illustrating the timing for data transfer from a first domain clocked at one frequency to a second domain clocked at a faster frequency for different sync clock frequency ratios of the first and second domain clocks.

Figure 9 is a state diagram of the sequence of operation illustrated in Figure 8.

20 Description of the Preferred Embodiments

In the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention.

Referring initially to Figure 1, a primary clock source 12 is connected to a group of sequencers 14, 16 and 18 for generating secondary clocks 20, 22 and 24 for driving different elements, circuits or domains (not shown in Figure 1) in a system or device of which the primary clock source 12 and sequencers 14, 16 and 18 and clocks 20, 22 and 24 form a part. The primary clock 12 is a stable, high frequency and symmetrical source. The primary clock 12 is connected to the sequencers 14, 16 and 18 through a

balanced fanout 19 to reduce scaler clock skew between the sequencers. A reset 26 is used to synchronously reset the sequencers 14, 16 and 18 to set all the sequencers in "lock step" during initialization of the circuit to guarantee that the secondary clocks 20, 22 and 24 will be in synchronization. The sequencers 14, 16 and 18 are respectively coupled to "clk A" 20, "Sync Pulse" 22 and "clk B" 24 by a balanced fanout tree with matching delays to insure the synchronization between the clocks 20, 22 and 24 and therefore synchronous low skew data transfer between domains clocked respectively by "clk A" 20 and "clk B" 24. Sync Pulse 22 is a sync message or pulse which will be used by "clk A" 20 and "clk B" 24.

Figure 2A is a detailed schematic diagram of an example of a sequencer 28 that may be used for the sequencers 14, 16 and 18 of Figure 1 to derive the secondary synchronous clocks 20, 22 and 24 operating at different frequencies. The sequencer 28 includes a set master and slave latch, flip flop or the like 30 and series of reset master and slave latches, flip flops or the like 32. The output of each of the master and slave latches 30 and 32 generate a clock pulse waveform that is phase or time shifted as shown in the timing diagram associated with Figure 2A. The clock pulses may be selected by a multiplexer or selector 34 to provide the desired clock pulse width and frequency. Examples of divide by 4 (/4), divide by 5 (/5) and divide by 6 (6/) clock frequency waveforms are shown in Figure 2A.

Figure 2B illustrates how a half cycle shift is generated from the master and slave flip flop 32. A clock distribution that provides a 50% duty cycle is used. The master and slave latches receive inverted clocks that provide for triggering on the pulse edges. The match latch C' output is used to obtain the half cycle phase shift C'.

Figure 3 is a further example of a secondary sync pulse sequencer 28' illustrating how secondary clock pulse waveforms of different frequencies for driving different circuits or domains within a system or device can be derived. Figure 3 further illustrates how the Sync Pulse is generated for different ratios of high to low clock pulse frequencies. For example, the Sync Pulse for a clock pulse ratio of 5:4 (200 Mhz to 166 Mhz) is generated by selecting the S+T+A+B outputs; the clock pulse ratio for 3:2 is generated by selecting K+L+A+B; and the clock pulse ratio for 1:1 is generated by selecting C+D+A+B.

Figure 4 shows an example of a basic sequencer element 30 or 32 for use in the

sequencers 28 and 28' of Figures 2A and 3. The basic sequencer element 30, 32 includes a master/slave flip flop 36. The slave output S is feed back to the input of a multiplexer or selector 38 and multiplexed with an input labeled "D." The output 40 of the multiplexer 38 is feed to the input of a second multiplexer 42 where the output 40 of the multiplexer 38 may be multiplexed with a 0 or 1 input. A "HOLD" function is provided with multiplexer 38 and a "SET/RESET (S/R)" function is provided with multiplexer 42. Each flip flop 30, 32 of all sequencers preferably have this functionality to permit synchronous reset and stop clock features.

In accordance with the present invention, shown in Figure 5 is an interface 44 for permitting synchronous data transfer between a first domain 46 clocked at one frequency by a secondary clock 50 and a second domain 48 clocked at another frequency by a secondary clock 52. Each of the domain clocks 50 and 52 are derived from the same high frequency source as previously described with respect to Figures 1-3. The interface 44 includes a first master and slave flip flop or the like 54 and a second master and slave flip flop or the like 56, each connected to the first domain 46. The master latches 54a and 56a of flip flops 54 and 56 are each respectively directly coupled to an input of the associated slave latch 54b and 56b of the flip flops 54 and 56. The Slave latch output for each flip flop 54, 56 is respectively feed back to a multiplexer or selector 58, 60 at the input of each master latch 54a and 56a, respectively. The Slave latch output is then multiplexed with any data from the first domain 38 loaded into either master latch 54a or master latch 56a. The master latch output of master latch 54a labeled "A" and the master latch output of master latch 54b labeled "B" are multiplexed into a slave latch 62 by a multiplexer or selector 64 at the input to the slave latch 62. The multiplexer 64 and slave latch 62 gate or transfer data loaded from the first domain 46 into either the master latch 54a or the master latch 56a into the second domain 48 as will be described in more detail herein.

The operation of the interface 44 for transferring data from the first domain 46 clocked at one frequency to the second domain 48 clocked at a slower frequency or clock speed is described by referring to the three sets of timing diagrams in Figure 6. Each set of waveforms represents a different ratio of clock frequencies between the first initially to the 3:2 ratio waveforms or timing diagrams, the first domain 46 is clocked at 200 Mhz and the second domain 48 is clocked at 133 Mhz. The synch pulse is derived

so that it begins and ends coincident with the negative edges of the faster domain clock in this case the 200 Mhz clock. As shown in Figure 6 the secondary clocks 50 and 52 for the first domain 46 (200 Mhz) and the second domain 48 (133 Mhz) are repeated in a systematic pattern with each cycle being framed by the sync pulse (vertical broken lines 66 and 6A8). An ABsel signal is generated to alternately select either the master latch 54a of flip flop 54 or the master latch 56a of flip flop 56 for loading data from the first domain 46. For simplicity of explanation in reference to Figures 5 and 6, the output "A" of the master latch 54a corresponds to clock pulses also labeled "A" in Figure 6. When an "A" clock pulse occurs in the 200 Mhz waveform clocking the first domain 46, data will be loaded into the master latch 54a and when an "A" clock pulse occurs in the slower frequency waveform (160 Mhz, 133 Mhz or 100 Mhz) the data loaded in the master latch 54a will be transferred or gated to the second domain 48 through the slave latch 62. Similarly, the output "B" of the master latch 56a for flip flop 56 corresponds to clock pulses also labeled "B" in Figure 6. When a "B" pulse occurs in the 200 Mhz waveform clocking the first domain 46, data will be loaded into the master latch 56a and when a "B" pulse occurs in the slower frequency waveform clocking the second domain, the data loaded in the master latch 56a will be transferred or gated to the second domain 48 from slave latch 62. . The ABsel select signal is generated to select the other of master latches 54a or 56a in response to or by a positive edge of an "A" or "B" pulse for loading data into one of the master latches 54a or 56a. For example, when a "B" pulse occurs clocking the first domain 46, data is loaded into the master latch 56a and the interface 44 is switched to the master latch 54a for receiving data when the next "A" pulse occurs. Similarly, the interface 44 will switch to the master latch 56a after an "A" pulse so that data can be loaded into the master latch 56a when the next "B" clock pulse occurs.

In the repeating pattern of Figure 6, the master latch 56a is initially selected or enabled by ABsel to receive data from the first domain 46. Data is then received or loaded into into the master latch 56a from the first domain 46 when the first domain is clocked by the 200 Mhz clock 50 as shown by the first "B" pulse 70 of the 200 Mhz clock waveform in Figure 6. After loading data into the master latch 56a the signal ABsel is generated to switch from master latch 56a to master latch 54a when the first domain 46 is next clocked for transferring data.

Slave latch 62 alternately looks at the outputs A and B of latches 54a and 56a, respectively. Because of the sync pulse 72, the second domain 48 will be synchronously clocked by a first "B" pulse 74 of the 133 Mhz clock 52 and the slave latch 62 will immediately transfer the data to the second domain 48. The negative edge 76 of the 133 Mhz "B" pulse will cause a signal ABtransfer (Figure 5) to be generated to toggle the slave latch 62 to look or switch to the "A" output of the master latch 54a.

The next clock pulse 78 of the 200 Mhz clock 50, designated "A" in Figure 6, will cause data from the first domain 46 to be loaded into the master latch 54a. The data in master latch 54a will then be transferred to the second domain 48 when the second domain 48 is clocked by the next clock pulse 80 of the 133 Mhz clock 52, correspondingly designated as "A" on the 133 Mhz waveform in Figure 6 to indicate correspondence with the "A" output of the master latch 54a. The negative edge 82 of the 133 Mhz "A" pulse will cause the signal ABtransfer to be generated to toggle the slave latch 62 to look or switch to the "B" output of the master latch 56a.

To prevent a race condition or the faster domain overrunning the slower domain and to force average data transfer rates and minimal latency, the next clock pulse of the 200 Mhz clock is designated as a "non-operate" (NOP) pulse 84 during which no data is loaded or transferred.

The waveforms labeled "A" and "B" in Figure 6 illustrate the time frames when data is valid for master latch 54a (A output) and master latch 56a (B output) and when the data is unreliable or uncertain as indicated by the "XXX" or cross-hatching. These periods occur after a toggle between master latches 54a and 56a when data is to be loaded into the other master latch.

As evident from Figure 6, the cyclical pattern will continue with data being loaded alternately into master latch 54a or master latch 56a from the first domain 46 and transferred to the second domain 48 when the second domain 48 is clocked by a next or subsequent clock pulse. By examination, it can be seen that the 5:4 and 2:1 ratio frequency differences between the second and first domains 46 and 48 operate in the same manner. By comparing the 3:2 waveforms to the 5:4 and 2:1 waveforms, it is apparent that the present invention works for various ratios of clock frequency differences for transferring data between domains clocked at different frequencies.

Figure 7 is a state sequence diagram illustrating the different operational states

for transferring data between the first and second domains 46 and 48 and further illustrates the repeating pattern for loading data into master latches 54a and 56a and transferring the data to the second domain 48. The sequence can be initialized or restarted by a master clear, mc=1, to reset the latches 54, 56 and 62. The sequence will
 5 then begin again when mc=0 and a sync pulse is received.

Referring now to Figure 8, a timing diagram for Figure 5 is shown illustrating the transfer of data from the domain 46 to the second domain 48 in which the first domain is clocked by a slower clock (160 Mhz, 133 Mhz or 100 Mhz) compared to the second domain which is clocked by a faster clock, in this case 200 Mhz. The interface
 10 44 will operate analogously to the previously described examples where data is being transferred from a faster clocked domain to a slower clocked domain (Figure 6). Referring to the 3:2 set of waveforms, the first "A" pulse 86 of the 133 Mhz waveform will permit data to be loaded into the master latch 54a from the first domain 46 in Figure 5. Because of the sync pulse 88, the second domain 48 is synchronously clocked
 15 by the "A" pulse 90 of the second domain clock 52, operating at 200 Mhz in this example and the data is immediately transferred into the second domain 48 via slave latch 62. As before, the negative edge of the second domain clock pulse will cause the slave latch 62 to toggle to look at the other of the "A" or "B" output of the master latches 54a and 56a. Accordingly, the negative edge 92 of the "A" clock pulse 90 of the
 20 200 Mhz clock will cause the slave latch 62 to switch to the "B" output of master latch 56a. To coordinate data transfer from the first and second domains 46 and 48 in this example of going from a slower clocked domain to a faster clocked domain, the next clock pulse 94 of the faster second domain clock 52 will be designated as a "HOLD" or non-operate (NOP) pulse to permit the slower clocked domain to catch up or keep up.
 25 The next "B" pulse 96 of the 133 Mhz first domain clock 50 will permit data from the first domain 46 to be loaded into the master latch 56a. The ABsel signal will be generated to toggle to master latch 54a to receive data when the first domain 46 is clocked by the next "A" pulse 98. When the second domain 48 is clocked by the next "B" pulse 100 of the second domain 200 Mhz clock 52, the data loaded into master
 30 latch 56a will be transferred via slave latch 62 to the second domain 48. As before, the negative edge 102 of the second domain "B" clock pulse 100 will generate the signal ABtransfer to cause the slave latch 62 to switch to the "A" output of master latch 54a to

receive data when the next "A" pulse 104 of the second domain clock 52 occurs.

Those of skilled in the art will recognize that the 5:4 and 2:1 ratio frequencies will operate analogously to that just described with respect to the 3:2 frequency ratio.

Figure 9 is a state diagram illustrating the different states of operation for
 5 transferring data from a first domain 46 clocked at one frequency to a second domain 48
 clocked at as faster frequency as illustrated by the timing diagrams in Figure 8.

One example of an application of the present invention is were the first domain
 46 may be a memory controller IC clocked at one rate or frequency that synchronously
 communicates with a memory, the second domain 48, that may be clocked at several
 10 possible rates. The present invention thus provides synchronous data transfer for
 several frequency ratios with a single design. This means that a migratory memory
 upgrade path is achieved without the need for costly IC redesigns and with the benefits
 of synchronous performance.

Although specific embodiments have been illustrated and described herein, it
 15 will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that any arrangement which is
 calculated to achieve the same purpose may be substituted for the specific embodiment
 shown. This application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations of the
 present invention. Therefore, it is intended that this invention be limited only by the
 claims and the equivalents thereof.

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What is claimed is:

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1. An interface for synchronous data transfer from a first domain clocked at one frequency to a second domain clocked at a slower frequency, comprising:

a first latch for receiving data from the first domain when the first latch is selected;

10 a second latch for receiving data from the first domain when the second latch is selected; and

a third latch for transferring data from said first latch or said second latch to the second domain when the second domain is clocked by a clock pulse, said third latch being alternately toggled to receive data from said first latch or said second latch in
15 response to a negative edge of the clock pulse clocking the second domain.

2. The interface of claim 1, wherein a first clock clocking the first domain and a second clock clocking the second domain are both derived from a single primary clock and generate clock pulses that repeat in a ratioed, systematic pattern framed by a
20 secondary synch pulse also generated by the same primary clock.

3. The interface of claim 2, wherein at least one clock pulse of the first domain clock is a non-operate (NOP) clock pulse in each repeated systematic pattern when no data from the first domain is loaded into either said first latch or said second latch to
25 cause equal average data transfer between the first domain and the second domain.

4. The interface of claim 3, wherein the NOP clock pulse is selected to minimize latency and prevent the slower clocked domain from being overrun by the faster clocked domain.
30

5. The interface of claim 1, wherein said first and second latches are alternately selected by a select signal, said select signal being generated to select one of said first or

second latches when the other of said first or second latches receives data.

6. An interface for synchronous data transfer between a first domain clocked at one frequency and a second domain clocked at a faster frequency, comprising:

5 a first latch for receiving data from the first domain when the first latch is selected;

a second latch for receiving data from the first domain when the second latch is selected; and

10 a third latch alternately toggled to receive data from said first latch or said second latch in response to a negative edge of a clock pulse, other than a hold pulse, clocking the second domain and said third latch transferring data from said first latch or said second latch to the second domain when the second domain is clocked by a next clock pulse that is not a hold clock pulse.

15 7. The interface of claim 6, wherein the clock pulses of the first domain and the second domain are both derived from a primary clock and repeat in a ratioed, systematic pattern framed by a secondary synch pulse.

20 8. The interface of claim 6, wherein the hold clock pulse is selected to minimize latency.

9. The interface of claim 6, wherein said first and second latches are alternately selected by a select signal, said select signal being generated to select one of said first or second latches when the other of said first or second latches receives data.

25

10. An interface for synchronous data transfer between domains clocked at different frequencies, comprising:

a first latch for receiving data from a first domain clocked at one frequency when said first latch is selected;

30 a second latch for receiving data from the first domain when said second latch is selected; and

a third latch for transferring data from either said first latch or said second latch to a second domain clocked at another frequency.

11. The interface of claim 10, wherein the first domain is clocked at a faster frequency than the second domain and wherein said third latch will transfer data to the second domain from said first or second latches when the second domain is clocked by a next clock pulse.

5

12. The interface of claim 11, wherein said third latch is alternately toggled to transfer data from said first latch or said second latch in response to a negative edge of a clock pulse clocking the second domain.

10 13. The interface of claim 10, wherein the first domain is clocked at a slower frequency than the second domain and wherein said third latch will transfer data to the second domain from said first or second latches is loaded when the second domain is clocked by a next clock pulse that is not a non-operate pulse.

15 14. The interface of claim 13, wherein said third latch is alternately toggled to transfer data from said first or said second latch in response to a negative edge of a clock pulse clocking the second domain unless the clock pulse is a non-operate clock pulse.

20 15. A method for synchronous data transfer between clocked domains, comprising:
loading a first master latch with data from the first domain in response to a first domain clock pulse;
transferring the data loaded in the first master latch to the second domain through a slave latch in response to a second domain clock pulse;
toggling the slave latch to switch to receive data from a second master latch in
25 response to a negative edge of the second domain clock pulse that is not a non-operate clock pulse;

loading the second master latch with data from the first domain in response to another first domain clock pulse;
transferring the data loaded in the second master latch to the second domain
30 through the slave latch in response to another second domain clock pulse;
toggling the slave latch to switch to receive data from the first master latch in response to the negative edge of the clock pulse of the second domain clock that is not a non-operate clock pulse;

repeating a cycle of alternately loading the first and second master latches and

transferring data to the second domain through the slave latch until a master clear signal is received by the slave and master latches; and

entering a non-operate state during each repeated cycle for at least one clock pulse of the faster domain clock, if the domains are clocked at different frequencies.

5

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising: generating a signal in response to loading one of the first or second master latches to cause data to be loaded alternately into the first and second master latches.

10 17. The method of claim 15, wherein each repeated cycle is framed by a synch pulse derived from a primary clock.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the non-operate state is selected to minimize latency in transferring the data between the domains.

15

19. The method of claim 15, wherein the clock pulses of the first domain and the second domain are both derived from a primary clock and repeat in a ratioed, systematic pattern framed by a secondary synch pulse.

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an interface and method for synchronous data transfer between domains clocked at different frequencies. The interface includes a first latch for receiving data from a first domain clocked at one frequency when the first latch is selected and a second latch for receiving data from the first domain when the second latch is selected. A third latch is provided for transferring data from either the first latch or the second latch to the second domain when the second domain is clocked.

"Express Mail" mailing label number: EL618476505US

Date of Deposit: July 20, 2000

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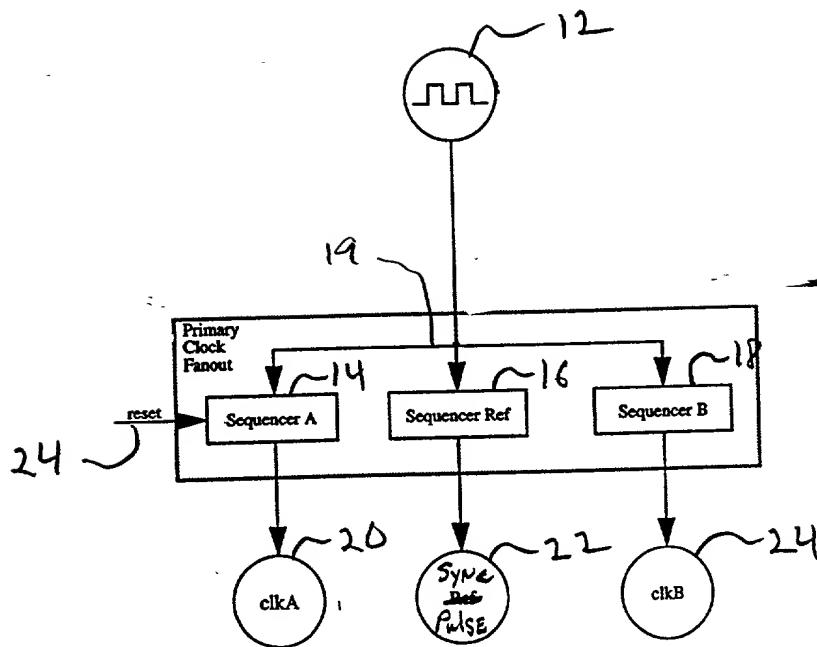


Fig. 1

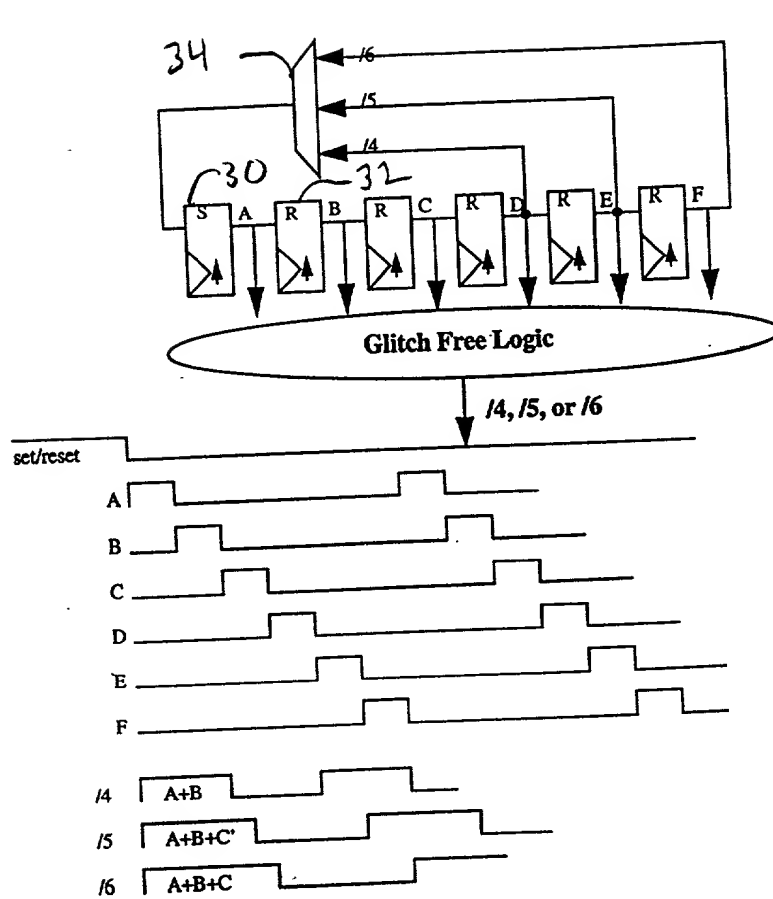


Fig. 2A

28

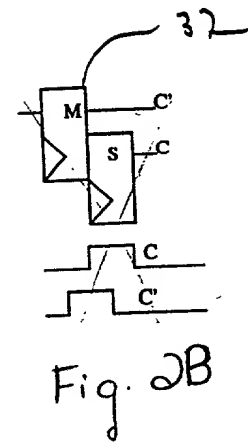


Fig. 2B

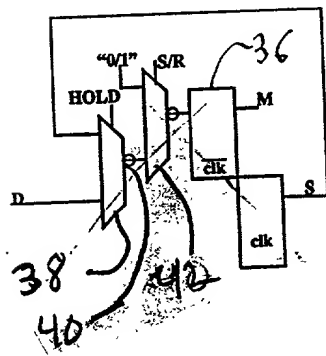


Fig 4

28' →
 34' →
 32' →
 31' →
 30' →
 29' →
 28' →
 27' →
 26' →
 25' →
 24' →
 23' →
 22' →
 21' →
 20' →
 19' →
 18' →
 17' →
 16' →
 15' →
 14' →
 13' →
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 5' →
 4' →
 3' →
 2' →
 1' →

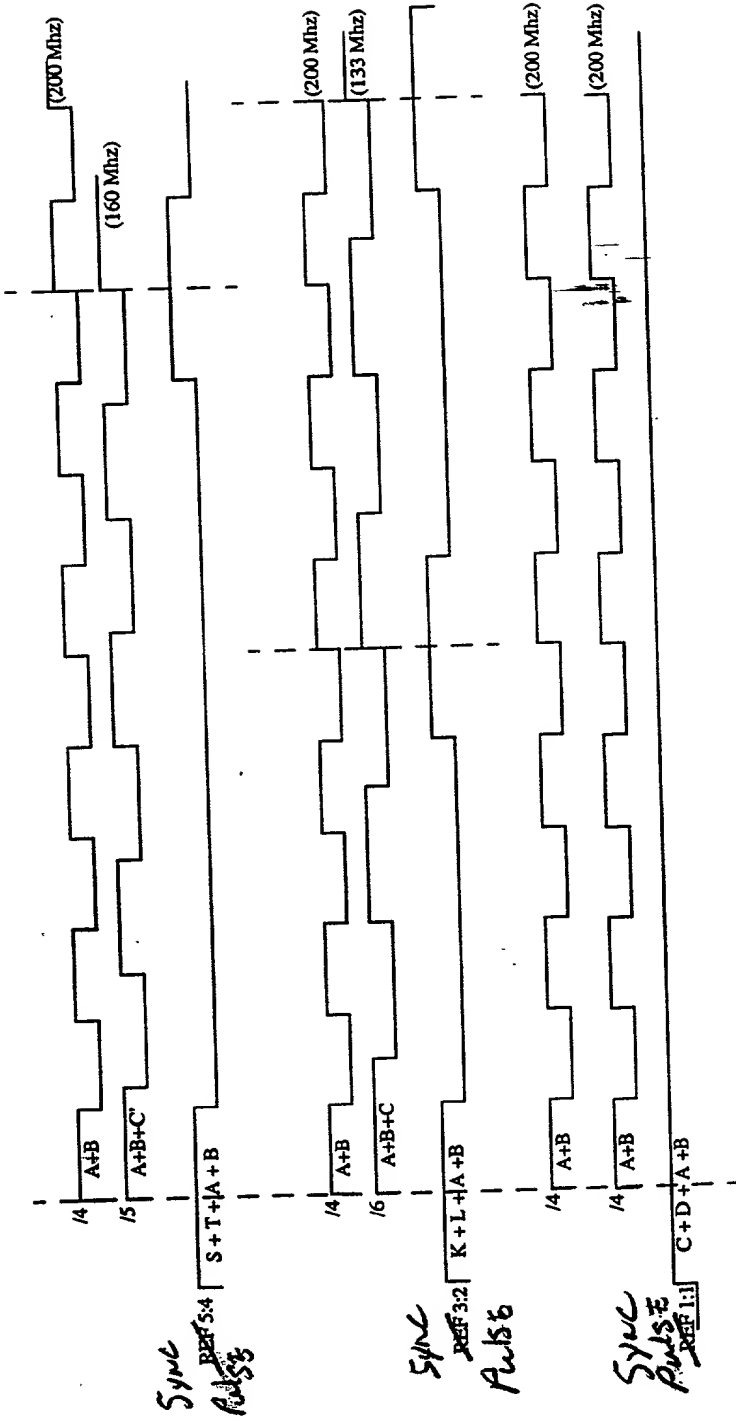
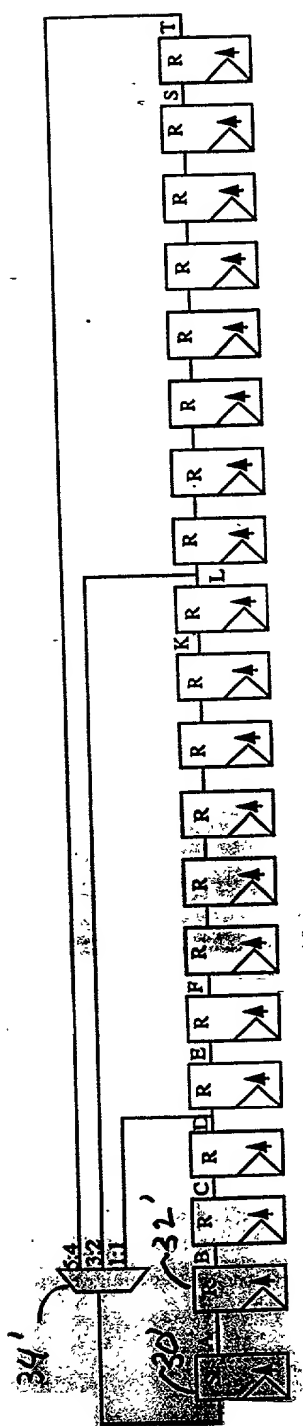


Fig. 3

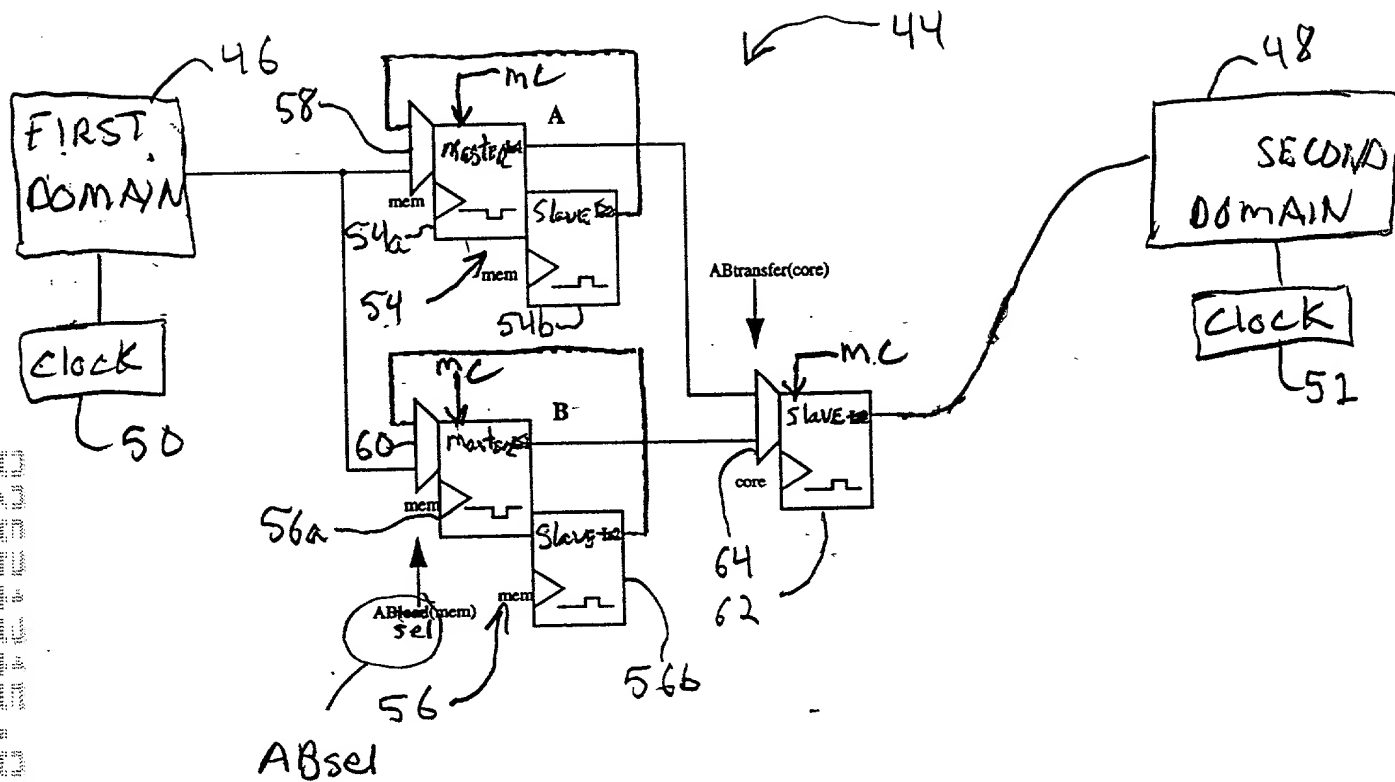


Fig. 5

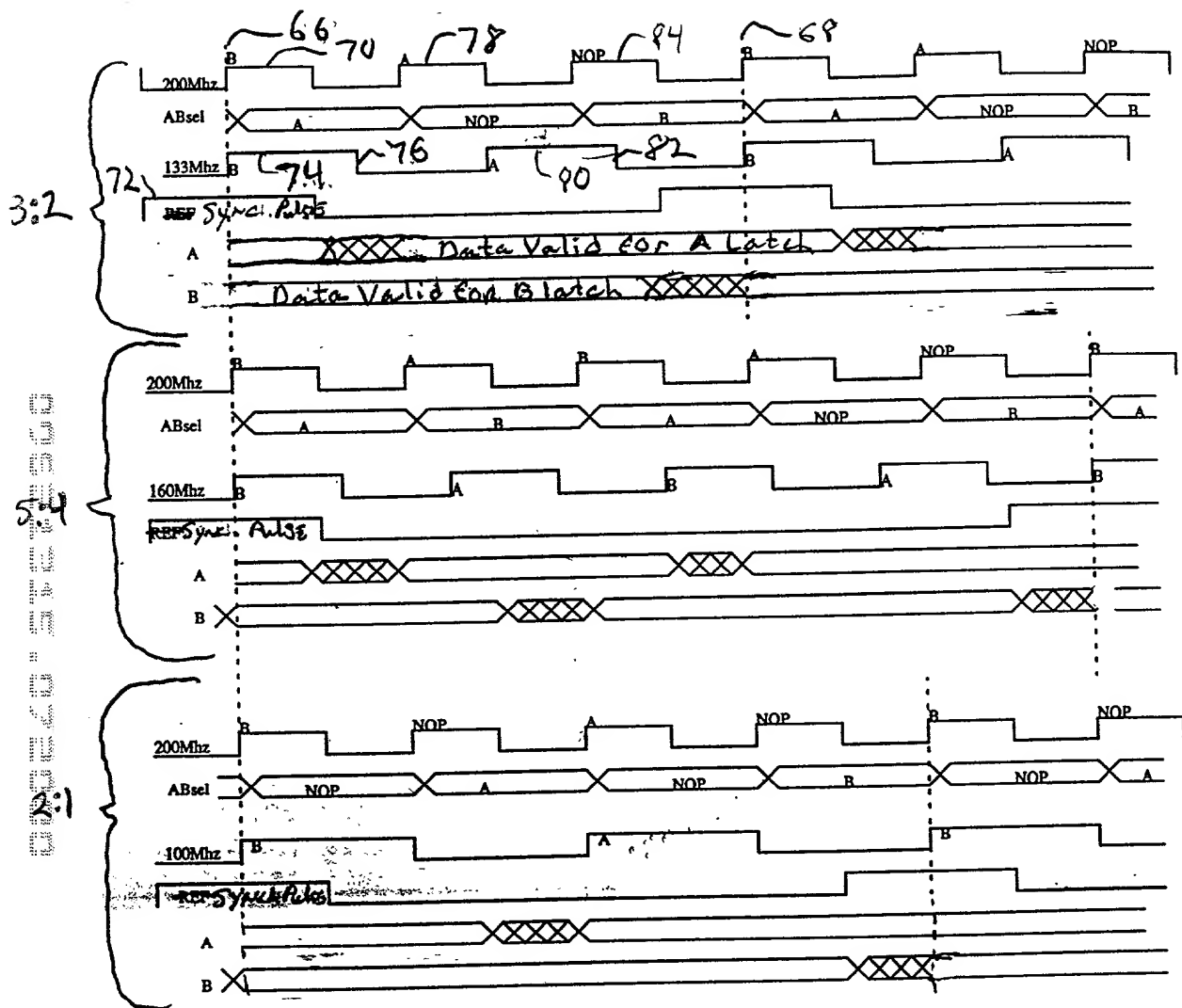
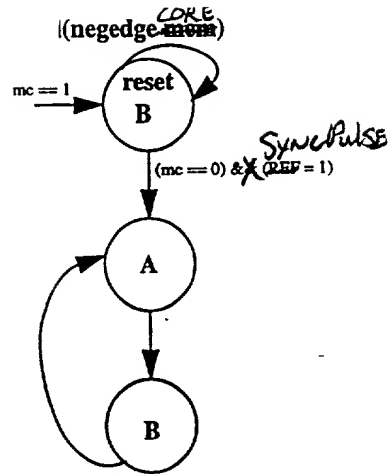


Fig. 6

ABtransfer



ABsel(posedge core)

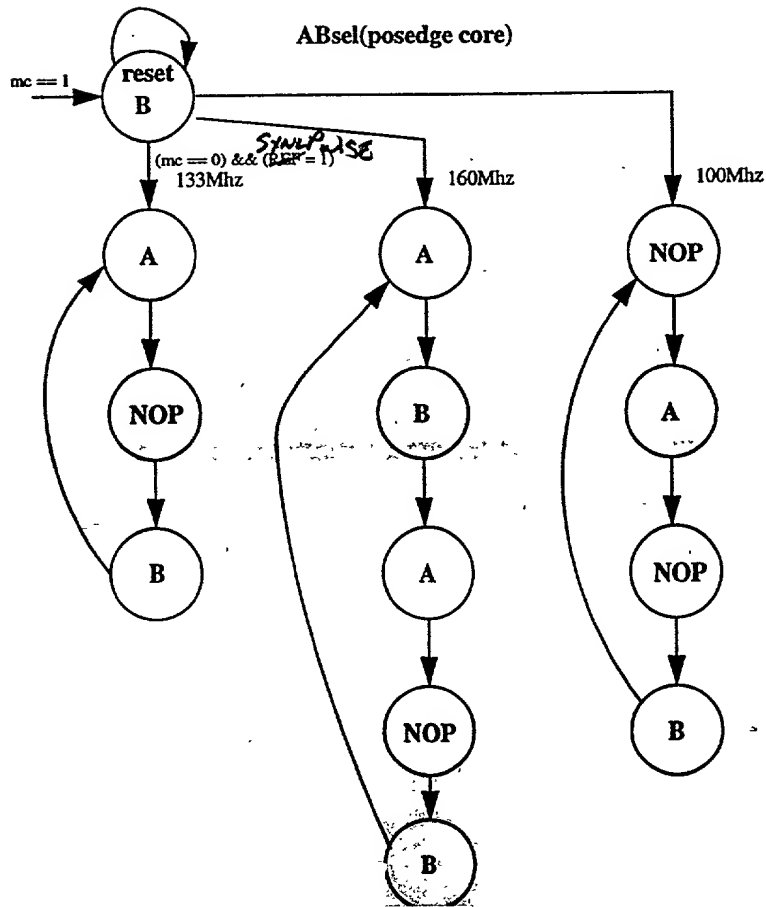


Fig 7

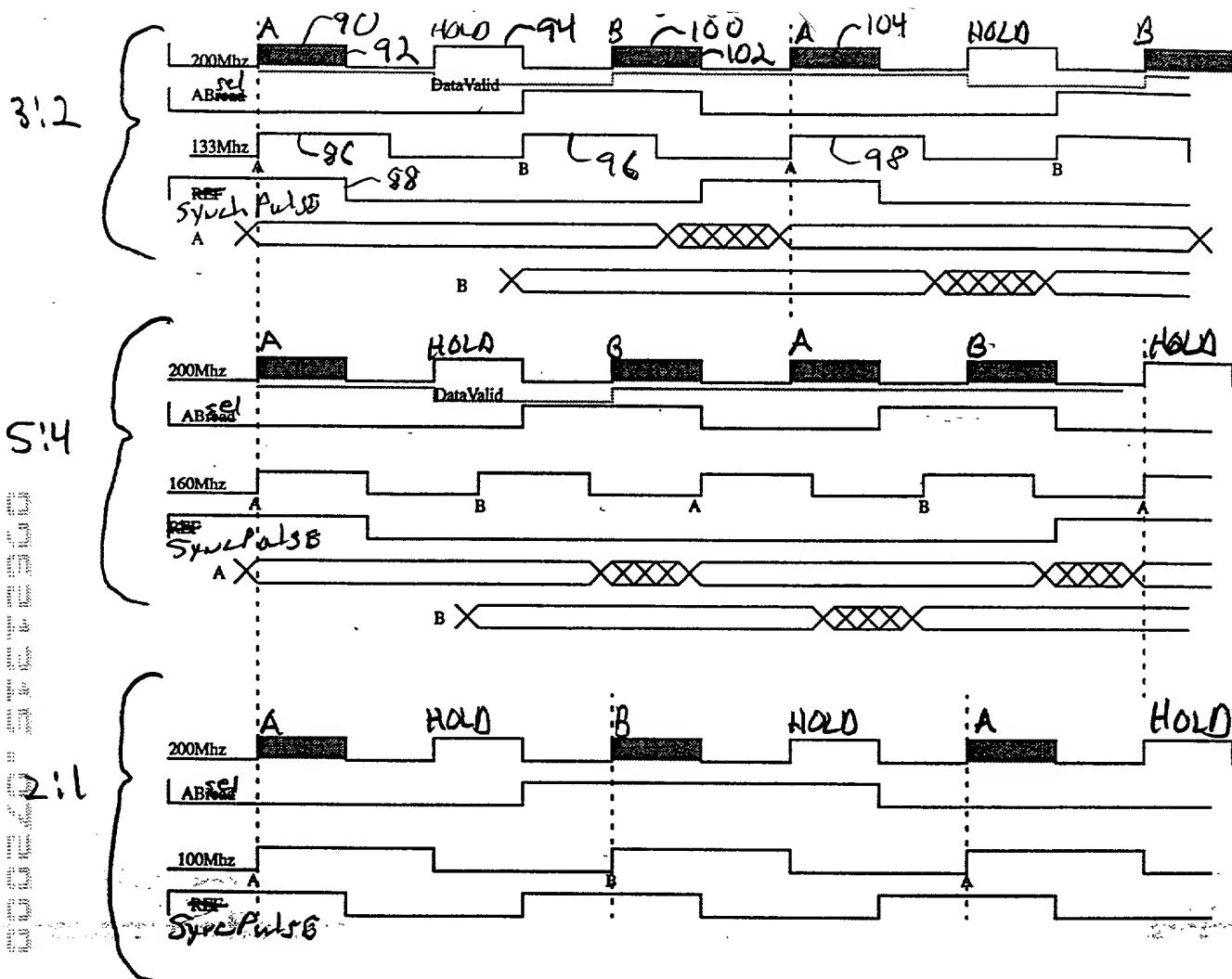


Fig. 8

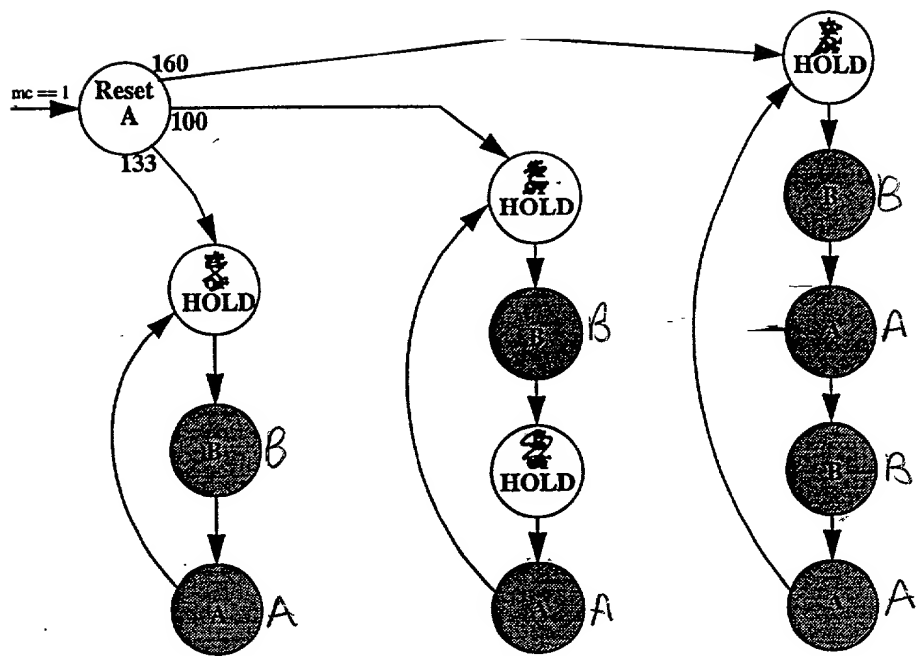


Fig 9

SCHWEGMAN ■ LUNDBERG ■ WOESSNER ■ KLUTH

United States Patent Application

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor I hereby declare that: my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name; that

I verily believe I am the original, first and joint inventor of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled: **AN INTERFACE FOR SYNCHRONOUS DATA TRANSFER BETWEEN DOMAINS LOCKED AT DIFFERENT FREQUENCIES.**

The specification of which is attached hereto.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.56 (attached hereto). I also acknowledge my duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability which became available between a filing date of a prior application and the national or PCT international filing date in the event this is a Continuation-In-Part application in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.63(e).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States of America, listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on the basis of which priority is claimed:

No such claim for priority is being made at this time.

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

No such claim for priority is being made at this time.

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. § 120 or 365(c) of any United States and PCT international application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT international application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.56(a) which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

No such claim for priority is being made at this time.

I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or patent agent(s) to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith:

| | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Anglin, J. Michael | Reg. No. 24,916 | Huebsch, Joseph C. | Reg. No. 42,673 | Nelson, Albin J. | Reg. No. 28,650 |
| Bianchi, Timothy E. | Reg. No. 39,610 | Jurkovich, Patti J. | Reg. No. 44,813 | Nielsen, Walter W. | Reg. No. 25,539 |
| Billion, Richard E. | Reg. No. 32,836 | Kalis, Janal M. | Reg. No. 37,650 | Oh, Allen J. | Reg. No. 42,047 |
| Black, David W. | Reg. No. 42,331 | Kaufmann, John D. | Reg. No. 24,017 | Padys, Danny J. | Reg. No. 35,635 |
| Brennan, Leoniede M. | Reg. No. 35,832 | Klima-Silberg, Catherine I. | Reg. No. 40,052 | Parker, J. Kevin | Reg. No. 33,024 |
| Brennan, Thomas F. | Reg. No. 35,075 | Kluth, Daniel J. | Reg. No. 32,146 | Perdok, Monique M. | Reg. No. 42,989 |
| Brooks, Edward J., III | Reg. No. 40,925 | Lacy, Rodney L. | Reg. No. 41,136 | Prout, William F. | Reg. No. 33,995 |
| Chu, Dinh C.P. | Reg. No. 41,676 | Lemaire, Charles A. | Reg. No. 36,198 | Schumm, Sherry W. | Reg. No. 39,422 |
| Clark, Barbara J. | Reg. No. 38,107 | LeMoine, Dana B. | Reg. No. 40,062 | Schwegman, Micheal L. | Reg. No. 25,816 |
| Crisman, Douglas J. | Reg. No. 39,951 | Lundberg, Steven W. | Reg. No. 30,568 | Scott, John C. | Reg. No. 38,613 |
| Dahl, John M. | Reg. No. 44,639 | Maeyaert, Paul L. | Reg. No. 40,076 | Smith, Michael G. | Reg. No. 45,368 |
| Drake, Eduardo E. | Reg. No. 40,594 | Maki, Peter C. | Reg. No. 42,832 | Speier, Gary J. | Reg. No. 45,458 |
| Embretson, Janet E. | Reg. No. 39,665 | Malen, Peter L. | Reg. No. 44,894 | Steffey, Charles E. | Reg. No. 25,179 |
| Fordenbacher, Paul J. | Reg. No. 42,546 | Mates, Robert E. | Reg. No. 35,271 | Terry, Kathleen R. | Reg. No. 31,884 |
| Forrest, Bradley A. | Reg. No. 30,837 | McCrackin, Ann M. | Reg. No. 42,858 | Tong, Viet V. | Reg. No. 45,416 |
| Gamon, Owen J. | Reg. No. 36,143 | Moore, Charles L., Jr. | Reg. No. 33,742 | Viksins, Ann S. | Reg. No. 37,748 |
| Harris, Robert J. | Reg. No. 37,346 | Nama, Kash | Reg. No. 44,255 | Woessner, Warren D | Reg. No. 30,440 |

I hereby authorize them to act and rely on instructions from and communicate directly with the person/assignee/attorney/firm/organization/who/which first sends/sent this case to them and by whom/which I hereby declare that I have consented after full disclosure to be represented unless/until I instruct Schwegman, Lundberg, Woessner & Kluth, P.A. to the contrary.

Please direct all correspondence in this case to **Schwegman, Lundberg, Woessner & Kluth, P.A.** at the address indicated below:
P.O. Box 2938, Minneapolis, MN 55402
Telephone No. (612)373-6900

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Mark Ronald Sikkink

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Citizenship: **United States of America** Residence: **Los Gatos, CA**
Post Office Address: **16205 Roseleaf Lane**
Los Gatos, CA 95032
Signature: _____ Date: _____
Bill Huffman

X Additional inventors are being named on separately numbered sheets, attached hereto.

Serial No. not assigned

Filing Date: not assigned

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Chippewa Falls, WI 54729**

Signature: _____

Vernon W. Swanson

Date: _____

Full Name of joint inventor number 4 : **Nan Ma**Citizenship: **United States of America**Residence: **Chippewa Falls, WI**Post Office Address: **618W Grand Avenue #9
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729**

Signature: _____

Nan Ma

Date: _____

Full Name of joint inventor number 5 : **Randal S. Passint**Citizenship: **United States of America**Residence: **Chippewa Falls, WI**Post Office Address: **9550 167 Street
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729**

Signature: _____

Randal S. Passint

Date: _____

Full Name of inventor:

Citizenship:

Residence:

Post Office Address:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

§ 1.56 Duty to disclose information material to patentability.

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclose information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is canceled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is canceled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§ 1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

- (1) prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and
- (2) the closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.

(b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

- (1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim; or
- (2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:
 - (i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or
 - (ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

- (1) Each inventor named in the application;
- (2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and
- (3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.

(d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.